

Shared Waters: Protecting Water Quality in Boundary Bay and its Smaller Basins, Semiahmoo Bay and Drayton Harbor

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Both Canadians and Americans use the waters of Boundary Bay and its smaller bays, Semiahmoo Bay, Drayton Harbor and Birch Bay for swimming and boating. Boundary Bay is an internationally important resting and feeding area for birds moving along the Pacific Flyway. The waters of Boundary Bay support a rich ecosystem that is home to eelgrass meadows, herring and shellfish. On both sides of the border there have been challenges to protecting water quality in this bay. Fecal coliform contamination has been a concern in certain areas. Historically on the Canadian side Boundary Bay contributed over 50% of the annual commercial oyster harvest for British Columbia. Boundary Bay is currently closed to bivalve shellfish harvesting on the Canadian side due to fecal coliform levels. On the U.S. side extensive community efforts to improve water quality have allowed for a conditional re-classification of Drayton Harbor to re-open bivalve shellfish harvesting. The Shared Waters Roundtable is an international multi-stakeholder working group focused on improving water quality in Boundary Bay, with special focus on Semiahmoo Bay and Drayton Harbor. The roundtable is particularly interested in improving fecal coliform counts through the use of monitoring, modeling, education and pollution source control initiatives.